

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

OF
POPULAR

LITERATURE, SCIENCE, AND ART.

Fourth Series

CONDUCTED BY WILLIAM AND ROBERT CHAMBERS.

No. 557.

SATURDAY, AUGUST 29, 1874.

PRICE 1½d.

THE BLOSSOMING OF AN ALOE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF 'A GOLDEN SORROW.'

CHAPTER I.—A PAIR OF FRIENDS.

TWENTY-ONE years ago, the railway system of the south of Scotland left much to be desired. The main lines, by which passengers were conveyed from the English to the Scottish capital, were indeed in full activity, and the iron road had pushed its irresistible way in the direction of the Highlands, but branch-lines in the south-westerly portions of Scotland did not exist, and certain primitive methods of locomotion were still retained among the customs of the country. The dwellers in Galloway and the Stewartry were accustomed to make light of distances which would appal us and them, now-a-days, if they had to be performed without the help of railroads; and the hospitalities of the southern counties were of a solid, durable, and costly kind, almost realising 'the rest day, the drest day, and the prest day' of the time of Sir Walter Scott and Miss Ferrier. Giving a dinner-party always implied having a house full of people 'from a distance,' for one night at least; anything within five or six miles was regarded as the immediate neighbourhood. Giving a ball meant several houses being filled with guests for the occasion, and a 'raccroo' lasting for two or three days after the special festivity, according to the popularity of the host, and the vigour of the choice spirits among the guests. On such occasions, stables, coach-houses, and court-yards presented a scene of crowd and bustle, only equalled by the bedrooms and dressing-rooms of the hospitable mansions, where bags and boxes had been unpacked, and the toilettes of the ladies, who came from beyond full-dress-in-a-carriage distance, were in progress.

Twenty-one years ago, a scene of much activity and bustle prevailed inside and outside of Barrholme, the dwelling-house of Sir Alexander Mervyn, a Scottish baronet of ancient lineage but

moderate fortune. Barrholme was situate in the south-westernmost corner of Galloway, on a strip of land boldly jutting into the channel, and placed as inconveniently as it could be placed, for all the purposes of social intercourse with the dwellers in the district. Barrholme was almost equidistant from all the smaller towns, and more than a score of miles—though of a singularly good road, which wound through beautiful scenery—lay between it and Dumfries. The site was eminently beautiful, and the old house was a picturesque structure; in which convenience had been less consulted than effect, and which recalled at first sight to the mind of the observer, a chivalrous and romantic state of things nowhere more utterly dead and done with than among the Lowland Scotch. A bold, rugged, dentellated sea-wall bounded the house, with an intervening space laid down in brownish turf, on two sides; the other two faced the woods and pleasure-grounds through which the approach lay, and had been modernised by the present owner, who had substituted 'compo' and plate-glass for the diamond-paned casements and rubble of old days. But the 'sea-front,' which was the back of the house, remained unchanged. Grim and bold it looked from the sea, with its castellated turrets, its rough gray walls, lichen-grown and weather-beaten, and its gray stone terrace, on which the shadow of a heavy stone balcony, crossing the face of the wall beneath the second row of windows in the main building, and communicating with the turrets by a narrow door on each side, was flung. From the turf plateau behind the house, a small iron gate gave access by a steep zigzag pathway to a broad rocky platform, beneath which the waves roared and tumbled, covering it with their spray in bad weather, but, in good, dashing harmlessly against its edge. This platform of rock was a favourite

resort with the dwellers in the old house; it formed a delightful open-air drawing-room in summer weather, and in winter it afforded a sheltered nook, from which the wild beauties of the sea and the sky might be observed. It formed a sort of recess as well, for it was closed on both sides by masses of rock, which descended to the sea, and it was the resort of multitudes of sea-gulls and divers. The approach to the old house of Barrholme, after winding through wood and pleasure-grounds, made an abrupt sweep down to the main road, which skirted the sea closely for four miles, with but one other dwelling between Barrholme and the village at the junction of the little promontory with the mainland. From the back windows of the house, or rather, as its inmates preferred to say, from its 'sea-front,' the winding coast-road was visible throughout its entire length, so that all the life and movement that came to Barrholme was perceptible from the sea-front. The land-front was secluded in the dignity of laurel hedges, trim shrubberies—protected by a fringe of well-grown fir plantation from the south winds—prim gardens, and three sets of gates which portioned off the graduated avenue.

A pleasant animation pervaded the old house one fine autumnal day, when the sea was lying still under a hazy sky, and the rich fleeting tints of the sad and beautiful season adorned the woods that thinly clothed the hill-sides. Stir and sound had been rife since early morning, and many arrivals had broken in upon the decorous duties of the forenoon at Barrholme, where life was wont to roll on with extreme precision, and an orderly observance of the time-and-place-for-everything rule, presumably associated with feelings not unduly keen or wide-ranging, on the part of the heads of the family. It required a good deal to put Lady Mervyn out of her accustomed groove; but, on the occasion in question, a good deal was going to happen. A daughter of the house was going to be married, and the event was to be celebrated by a ball. A wedding and a ball, in even the best-regulated family, must cause some commotion; when the double event involves a large party of staying company, the commotion is excusably great.

Guests from a distance were arriving, and being shewn to their rooms, while their equipages, generally of the smart dog-cart order, much affected in Scotland, were driven off to stables, which were well removed from the house, and hidden by thick plantations. The marriage ceremony was to take place, according to the Presbyterian custom, at the bride's house, in the afternoon, and the newly-married couple were to make a brief appearance at the ball before starting on the first stage in their joint journey of life. On similar occasions it frequently happens that the individuals most directly and nearly concerned are precisely those who stand most apart from the general movement, and enjoy a degree of leisure undreamt of by others. Sir Alexander Mervyn, Lady Mervyn, and the entire household were positively busy in their several ways, and comparatively agitated; the house-keeper was waiting on her ladyship—some import-

ant matter concerning the supper being in discussion—the maids were engaged with the visitors; the butler and his *aides* were passing in review the tables on which the wedding banquet was spread; even the dogs were restless, and had something on their minds. Sir Alexander Mervyn was shut up in his library—where the medicine bottles were almost as numerous as the books, and much more frequently resorted to—with his man of business, looking over the settlements which were to be signed presently, and giving utterance to peevish discontent with the worry and disturbance caused by the wedding festivities. The people who had arrived were in all the fuss of unpacking and dressing in a strange house; in short, only one member of the family circle seemed to have nothing particular to do, and plenty of time to look about her. This individual was the bride, Marion Mervyn. Her dress was all ready, laid out upon her bed; but she need not begin to array herself in those rich white robes for more than an hour to come, and she is employing that hour very literally in looking about her; having quietly made her way unobserved to the little gate in the sea-wall, and descended the steep rocky path to the platform overhanging the smooth murmuring waves.

The sun of that autumnal day, twenty-one years ago, found few prettier objects beneath his rays than Marion Mervyn, as she stepped cautiously down to the old familiar place where she had passed so many happy hours, both before she had known Gordon Graeme, who would be her husband before the sun should have gone down, and since their betrothal. She was a bright, merry, kindly, fair young girl, with blue eyes, rich brown hair, a beautiful figure, a frank and tender smile, and a most unnational voice and accent. Life had been very calm and peaceful for Marion Mervyn; she had never known a great sorrow, nor even a serious vexation. Her story might be called commonplace, if cheerfulness, content, and prosperity were common things; it certainly was as unromantic as any life-history in which love has a place could be. She was an only daughter, and surrounded with all the comfort usually enjoyed by only daughters. She had nothing to do but what she liked, and nobody to think of except herself, in any practical sense. Papa was 'tiresome' at times, and mamma was 'hard to get on with,' but these characteristics came less in her way than they came in that of other people who had domestic or social relations with Sir Alexander and Lady Mervyn, who were parents of the kind who do not demand, and indeed would be bored by much demonstration from their children. They were fond of Marion, but Sir Alexander could nurse his gout and his nerves much better without a girl perpetually hanging about him, and Lady Mervyn was too absolutely attached to her own will about everything, and her own way of doing everything, to desire the intrusion even of a daughter on the independent, indeed imperious, concentration of her life. Thus it came about that Marion Mervyn had few or none of those small but exact and systematically recurrent duties to discharge, none of those easy but important services to render, which are of inestimable value in forming the character of women, and which supply their best human safeguard against hardness and egotism. Marion's nature was, however, a fine and a healthy one, and

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she was neither hard nor egotistical. When Marion had reached the precise age at which Sir Alexander and Lady Mervyn wished her to 'settle in life,' she met the precise man whom they would have wished to share that settlement, and the result was love at first sight. This not usually safe or lasting sentiment had met with no obstacle. Gordon Graeme was the eldest son of a Scottish baronet of lineage almost as ancient as that of Sir Alexander Mervyn. Gordon was a good-looking young fellow, of amiable disposition and simple tastes, whose ideal of happiness was to settle down with his Marion on a large farm allotted to him by his father, in a neighbourhood where there was remarkably good sport. Not a ripple had troubled the course of true love in this instance, and as the lovers were respectively blessed with easy tempers and complete sincerity of character, their engagement had lacked the affectation of lover's quarrels, and the emotions of flirtation on either side. The wedding-day had come in due course, and, with the exception of a misfit in her wedding-gown, which had happily been discovered and rectified in time, no shadow of care had fallen upon the bride.

As calm and happy as she felt, Marion Mervyn looked, as she stepped upon the rocky platform, and stood still for a moment, viewing the smooth, sunny sea.

'Marion!' said a voice close by, and she turned quickly, and saw a woman sitting in an angle of the rocks at the far end of the platform.

'Anne!' she exclaimed, walking towards her. 'How came you here?'

'How came *you* here? I think I may well ask the question. I came because the house is hot and bustling, and because all my things are ready; I have nothing more to do until it is time to dress, and I felt unsettled and idle in the house.'

'And I,' said Marion, as she seated herself on a rock a little above the speaker's place, and leaned caressingly over her, 'came here for precisely identical reasons—a happy thought, was it not?—because it gives us time for another last talk, in addition to our solemn gossip of last night. Why, Anne! you've brought your glass! how delightful—I shall see him ever so much sooner now. How stupid of me not to bring a glass! I shall be able to see the dog-cart as soon as it turns the Point.'

She took from a crevice in the rock, by her companion's side, a hand-telescope, and raised it to her eye. The action probably prevented her from noticing, that at her words the girl's face had flushed a burning red.

'He ought to be here very shortly now,' Marion continued; 'the chestnut goes at a tremendous pace, and he was to leave Dumfries at noon exactly. How still the water is. How plainly I can see the road, and the strand, and the bit of black rock at the Point; I declare, I could almost count the tufts of heather! There, a bird has flown across the glass. I'll put it down for a little, it hurts my eyes to look through it long.'

She did so, and then they were both silent; that 'last talk' was not progressing. Marion sat looking at her companion, from whose face the vivid blush had faded, and Anne Cairnes sat looking over the sea towards the road which swept round the curve of the little bay.

The contrast between the two girls was remarkable. Anne Cairnes was perhaps as handsome as

Marion, but she had neither brightness nor bloom, such as formed the chief charms of the bride-elect. Her complexion was dark, smooth, clear, and varying; her eyes were of the deepest, darkest, softest brown; and her hair, of which she had a great profusion, was as nearly black as the hair of any woman of purely European blood ever is. Her features were harmonious and refined, but the chief attraction of her face was its expression, though that expression undoubtedly detracted from its youthfulness, and pointed the contrast between her and Marion. Anne Cairnes looked older than her twenty years; Marion Mervyn looked less than her nineteen summers; in the one face might be read some expression of wintry weather; the other was a dial true to the old legend, marking no hours but those of sunshine. The one face was full of hope and joy, the other of thought and patience. Anne's stature surpassed that of Marion by a head, but her slight figure had not the graceful roundness of her companion's, nor had her air and carriage the unaffected distinction which Lady Mervyn was fond of alluding to as characteristic of the Mervyns, and an invariable endowment of the Maitlands. Her ladyship was a Maitland. Anne's dress was rich and handsome, a little too much so, for her age; Marion's was perfectly simple and girlish; and something in the respective manner and tone of the two girls carried out the contrast.

CHAPTER II.—SHORN GREATNESS.

'When did you come out here?' asked Marion, once more adjusting the small hand-telescope, and bringing it to bear upon the curve of the bay.

'When Sir Alexander sent for you. I never thought of seeing you again until dressing-time. Shall you not be missed? Is there no risk of your being wanted?'

'Not the least; I cannot be wanted until Gordon comes, and he must come soon. Anne, do you know, I never thought until just now, before I saw that you were here, a thought which I suppose ought to have come into my mind many times, and would certainly have come into yours: supposing I had fallen in love with Gordon as I did, and he had *not* fallen in love with me, what would have become of me? What should I have done? Died?'

She turned a laughing face upon Anne, but tears rose in her eyes.

'Died!' repeated Anne Cairnes, meeting the smile with a shake of her head and a slight trembling of her lips. 'O no; one does not die of that sort of thing.'

'Doesn't one? Then one might as well, I think, for I am sure life cannot be worth having with that sort of thing in it; and I *know* I should have died if Gordon had not cared for me. Now, I just ask you, Anne, what could I do with myself, if I hadn't him, and the life that is to begin for us to-day?'

'What a useless question, Marion, within two hours of your wedding. I could tell you, of course, but I will not. You call me as it is, you know, a being full of grave discourse, and I don't mean to justify the description to-day.'

'Very well, we will not then touch upon what might have been. Is it not strange that I am not in the least nervous or agitated? I think you are more nervous than I am. I suppose it is because

Gordon and I have been so much together, and everything has gone so smoothly and well with us. It will not be so very much of a change, after all. I wish they would come, though there's not the least sign of them yet.' She was looking through the glass again. 'I told Hannah to hang my red shawl out of the turret-window when she wants me to begin dressing, and I am afraid the signal will be made before the dog-cart comes round the Point; Hannah has such very severe notions about the dignity of clothes, and the impertinence of putting them on in a hurry.'

'I should think so, indeed, on one's wedding-day,' said Anne. 'Who had arrived when you came out?'

'All the staying people, I believe; I heard the Muirs talking, as usual, about horses and dogs, on the stairs, and Gairloch "speering" as he would say, after "Dawvid," who will avoid him religiously when he comes. David grows worse and worse in his intolerance of the good people about here—haven't you noticed it, Anne? He makes mamma quite uncomfortable sometimes; he shews his impatience so plainly. Now Gordon gets on very well with them, though their pedigrees, and their practical jokes, and their entire ignorance of books annoy him also; but then he always says, what does it matter to us? we need not mind them. David does mind them, and it's my belief he hates the place; and when he is master of Barrholme, I don't think he will ever live here.'

'Captain Mervyn has been so long away, and a military life is so different,' said Anne Cairnes hesitatingly.

'Oh, of course, I don't blame him a bit, and if he marries and settles down, it will be all right. Gordon and I often say, what does it matter about the people one lives among; what does anything matter outside one's own home? I suppose David will think so too some day.'

Marion had no notion that any narrowness attended this sentiment, which is not an uncommon one for young folks in love to entertain.

'It is more than time for them to be making their appearance,' she continued. 'They cannot be here for a full half-hour after we shall see them come round the Point. I hope nothing has gone wrong! Just fancy if David should have missed the mail from London last night, or the train from Carlisle this morning, and Gordon should not have found him at Dumfries! How disgusting that would be! At all events, Gordon would know that there could be no use in waiting, and though it would be horrid to be without David, and mamma would be very much annoyed, it could not be helped.' Then, after a short pause, she exclaimed: 'There he is! There he is! I see the dog-cart turning the Point!'

'Mr Græme?' asked Anne.

'Yes; Gordon and David! It's all right! They are in capital time! the chestnut is coming along in grand style. What a pity Phemie Muir is not here to talk about its pace, and its form, and get up captivation for David, now that Gordon is out of her reach!'

Marion was standing on the platform, her arms raised, holding the telescope, her fair curls tossed back behind her head; but Anne had not changed her position. She was still sitting in the angle of the rocks where Marion had found her; and her eyes, looking far across the water to the curving

road under the hill-side upon the shore, seemed to discern the approach of the travellers, without the glass. As Marion uttered the last words, a red shawl was hung out of a window in one of the turrets of the old house, and waved about to attract the attention of the bride-elect. Anne saw it, and rose. 'There's the signal, Marion. You must go, dear. Our last talk has not meant very much, after all.'

'Will you not come with me?' said Marion, as she handed the telescope to Anne; 'it is nearly time for you to begin to dress also.'

'No; I will take a few minutes more here, and then run home through the shrubberies. Papa and I are to come in state in the carriage, you know, at four o'clock.'

The girls parted with a kiss, and Marion climbed the steep road to the terrace; whence—so clear was the air—she could hear the sharp trot of the chestnut thoroughbred, and the roll of the wheels which were swiftly bringing to Barrholme her bridegroom and her brother.

The home of Anne Cairnes was the nearest house to Barrholme. There were but these two upon the little promontory; and it was the greatest grievance of Sir Alexander Mervyn's life—a grievance greater than his gout and his nerves—that there was more than one. In the good old times, Mervyn of Barrholme had owned the whole of that choice and exclusive slice of the beautiful earth; but an extravagant, ill-regulated Mervyn had arisen in the land half a century or so before Sir Alexander, who had got into difficulties, from which he had extricated himself by selling one half of the estate. He had done his best to prevent his son from following his example, by entailing the other half; but still the glory of Barrholme had declined in his time, and he was held reproachfully in memory.

The dismembered portions of Barrholme had changed owners more than once in the interval, but, until recently, the Mervyns had escaped the mortification of any of them being built upon. A keeper's cottage and a few farming offices had long been the only offences in brick and mortar perpetrated by the successive proprietors of one piece of the land known as the Tors. But this was altered now, and visitors to Barrholme, in its dignified seclusion and solitude at the land's end, passed, half-way down the promontory, and close to the first gates of the old demesne, a brand new 'mansion,' of the very last Manchester taste, than which anything more utterly and singularly out of harmony with Barrholme and its surroundings it would be impossible to conceive. In the latter instance, only the urgent appeals of convenience were suffered to prevail for the alteration of anything old; and if Sir Alexander could always have had his own way, even those appeals would have been disregarded; for Sir Alexander was more than old-fashioned, more than conservative in his notions; he was positively feudal. He always spoke of the farmers who held land under him as his 'people,' and of the household servants as his 'retainers'—a harmless weakness, which amused such of his neighbours as possessed a sufficient sense of humour to enjoy any joke not of a practical kind. At the Tors house, called by its proprietor Victoria Lodge, everything was new; and the constant aim of Mr Cairnes, a worthy person who had made a large

fortune in the cotton-trade, was to preserve this characteristic of newness. The large square building was of white cut stone, the large square windows were of plate-glass with high mahogany frames, and new scroll-work balconies, and every article of furniture in Victoria Lodge was in the height of the fashion of twenty-one years ago. Mr Cairnes kept pace with change and the fantasies of fashion then, by dint of money, with accuracy to which a fortune twice as large as his would hardly now suffice; and the only wonder was that he had not tried London as a sphere, rather than a remote part of the south of Scotland. But Mr Cairnes was a character in his way; he had a keen liking for a good bargain, a great belief in land, and an intimate perception that London would not do for him, nor he for London. He made a very good bargain, indeed, when he bought the Tors, and he felt all the inclinations and possibilities for becoming a county gentleman, when he set about building Victoria Lodge in the best style, but still with sound precaution against useless expenditure, and security for the superiority of every department of the undertaking. He intended it to be everything that the residence of a county gentleman ought to be, and he carried out his intention. Everybody began by laughing at, and ended by admiring, Victoria Lodge, except Sir Alexander and Lady Mervyn, who hated it always, from the laying of the first stone, through all the busy building—which Sir Alexander affected to ignore, but in reality narrowly watched—to the grand ‘house-warming,’ whither many persons who had made contemptuous mention of the ‘new’ people repaired with alacrity.

It was not until Victoria Lodge was completed, from the well-stocked cellars to the airy and commodious garrets—superior to many of the bedrooms at Barrholme—until the carriages were in the coach-houses, the horses in their stalls, a perfectly appointed dairy in working order, and a flower-garden in a very tolerable state of progress, that the mistress of the house made her appearance in the neighbourhood. Mr Cairnes was already well known in the county; for more than a year past he had been constantly back and forwards between Manchester and Galloway, and not a little curiosity prevailed respecting Mrs Cairnes. She arrived a few days before the ‘house-warming,’ and proved to be a quiet, gentle, delicate little woman, too much of an invalid to enjoy the fine things which her husband, who worshipped her and could not bear to believe the truth about her health, had provided for her. She came, accompanied by her daughter—a tall, thin, dark-eyed girl of fifteen—who was the darling of her heart, the confidant of every thought, and who knew, as well as she herself knew it, that the fine new house would shortly know her mother’s tranquil presence no more. Mrs Cairnes received the attentions of the people about with a gentle, rather colourless civility; but she made no friends, and she took no place; and when, just two years after the installation at Victoria Lodge, she died, the event caused no emotion outside her own family. Sir Alexander and Lady Mervyn, who had ‘got on very well with the new people,’ were quite puzzled by the terrible grief of the insignificant little woman’s husband, and the dumb despair of her daughter, who was ‘turning out very well indeed.’ Anne had been adjudged worthy

of the friendship of Marion Mervyn, who had taken an immense fancy to the Manchester girl at first sight. Only one member of the family at Barrholme felt personal sorrow on the occasion of Mrs Cairnes’s death. This was David Mervyn, Sir Alexander’s only son, a young man who did not resemble either of his parents, in person or in mind, and between whom and the invalid lady at the Tors House there had grown up an odd sort of companionship and a steadfast reciprocal regard. David Mervyn had joined his regiment, a crack cavalry corps, and was in Ireland, when Mrs Cairnes died. When he came to Barrholme on his first leave, he found Victoria Lodge shut up. Mr Cairnes and his daughter, they told him, were not expected to return for several months; but he had given special orders that his ‘shootings’ were to be placed at Mr Mervyn’s disposition. David did not see the widower and his daughter until more than a year had elapsed since the death of Mrs Cairnes, and then Anne was a tall, grave, thoughtful girl of eighteen, who had taken her place as mistress of her father’s house, and was dividing her life pretty equally between her home duties and the demands of the friendship between herself and his sister Marian.

As things were then, so they had remained until the date at which this simple story commences. The life of the girl-friends had been lived side by side, all sunny, prosperous, and serene. Love had come, and marriage was coming to Marion; as yet, Anne was fancy and promise free; that was all the difference. It would not be always thus, Marion thought, not even thus for long, but she fancied Anne would be very hard to please. There was Gordon, for instance; she and Anne had met him on the same occasion, he had been introduced to them both simultaneously, and he had not produced the least impression upon Anne! So much the better, of course, and uncommonly lucky for her (Marion), but, at the same time, how very unaccountable. Gordon laughed at her when she said so to him, for imagining him to be peculiarly captivating, but she knew she was right. There were those Muir girls, whom he could not bear—he always said they were stable-boys spoiled—any one of the four would have married Gordon if he had asked, or rather allowed her to do it. At all events, Marion hoped, when the right man should make his appearance, that he would not want to take Anne far away. Marion would, of course, have gone to any distance, away from any one, with Gordon, but it was an additional blessing in her lot that her new home was only ten miles from Barrholme.

After the bride-elect had left her alone upon the platform, Anne Cairnes continued to sit in the angle of the rocks, looking towards the winding road, and listening for the sound of wheels, which after a few moments reached her distinctly. When she ceased to hear them, she knew that the carriage had turned off the coast-road, and was ascending the hill which led to the gates of Barrholme. Then she rose, and slipping through an opening in the rampart of rocks, made her way along a narrow path which skirted the sea-wall, until she gained the boundary between Barrholme and the Tors on the sea-side. Here a gate admitted her to her own domain, and in a few

minutes she reached the house, where Mr Cairnes met her, with the information that the bridegroom had arrived with Captain Mervyn from Dumfries, and that they had just passed Victoria Lodge in the dog-cart.

SPAIN AND THE SPANIARDS.

TRULY says the proverb, 'Pride goeth before destruction.' The ruination of Spain, however, is due to more than pride. Among the primary causes of decay in that once great country we have to reckon gross ignorance, religious bigotry, sloth, and neglect of social improvement. The internal institutions remain pretty much what they were centuries ago. The roads and inns are in many places little different from what we hear of them in the graphic details of Cervantes. In short, Spain has stagnated while other countries have advanced. Prim and Amadeus would probably have put things right; but Prim was barbarously assassinated, and Amadeus was glad to get away from a nation so disappointing and wholly unworthy of him. Then came dissensions, bloodshed, anarchy, civil war, and financial bankruptcy. What a spectacle to the world, what a lesson! The Spain of Charles V.—the Spain that alarmed England with its Armada—coldly viewed on the Stock Exchange, and its claims to credit almost treated with derision!

At this juncture, and while so-called republicans and Carlists are tearing each other in pieces, comes a book entitled *Spain and the Spaniards*. It is from the pen of a clever and observant writer, with the strange Turkish-sounding appellation of Azamat-Batuk, but whose real style and title appears to be M. N. L. Thieblin. He was special correspondent of the *New York Herald* for Spain, in March 1873, and returned after the close of the Carlists' summer campaign in October. Spain had been visited by him before; and his pages, therefore, not only, as he himself says, 'contain but little of what has been already published in the *Herald*,' but, no doubt, contain a great deal more than would have been suggested by one special trip.

In one respect at least, our *quasi-Turk* shews boldness and originality; for, with the exception of Spanish bonds, there is scarcely anything Spanish for which he has not a word of praise, or, at anyrate, of excuse. This is so unusual, that one might almost fancy him to regard fair Spain as already a lovely corpse, and to be speaking of her as the well-worn proverb bids us to speak of the dead. To say nothing of our personal experience, if we happen to have any, we are to disregard also the experience of others, and believe that Spain and the Spaniards have met with treatment similar to that accorded to a certain person who is said not to be really so black as he is painted. We should read the books of Mr Ford, of Mr George Borrow, and of Mr Augustus Hare, and 'the sublime chapter in the second volume of Buckle's *History of Civilisation*,' and

then we shall be almost compelled 'to go to the Peninsula to study it, to enjoy its beauties, to live among its genial and generous population,' and almost 'to ask their pardon for all the wrongs which strangers have done to that delightful country.' Our *quasi-Turk* admits that, if the 'higher education of women,' as it is called, be still to seek amongst ourselves, it has not yet begun to be so much as dreamed of in Spain, where the fair Spaniards, as a general rule, whatever their social status may be, 'do not possess half the knowledge of an average middle-class woman of England or Germany (however little that may be);' and indeed, partial as he is to Spain and the Spaniards, he himself declares that 'however high an opinion one may have of the natural merits of the Spaniards, their ignorance never fails to shock the stranger. In high as in low classes it is equally amazing.' But, on other points, he conducts his defence with amazing vigour. 'The free-and-easy manner,' he says, 'shewn by the fair sex throughout all classes of Spanish society, causes a good many foreigners to form a rather unfavourable opinion of the morals of Spanish ladies;' but he laughs the idea to scorn.

No doubt, an idea prevails in England that it is a common habit for Spanish women, and even Spanish ladies, to smoke; but he asserts that, except the *cigarrera* (the working-women at the cigar factory) and a few ladies from Cuba, no Spanish woman ever smokes; but, *en revanche*, 'the toothpick is carried all day long (in Andalusia) in their mouth, and the fish is eaten not only with a knife, but sometimes with the miniature fingers adorned with rosy nails. Such little savageries may, perhaps, seem shocking to European routine, but they are done in such a natural and graceful way that you cannot help admiring them.' And he declares, 'that you must take all the virtue of the most virtuous Englishwoman, all the grace and wit of the most graceful and witty Frenchwoman, and all the beauty of the most handsome Italian woman, to make something approaching to a perfect Spanish lady.' This is enough to make one doubt whether 'a perfect Spanish lady' can possibly exist.

The ingenuous simplicity with which our *quasi-Turk* describes and defends certain phases in the social life of his favourites, is really amusing. If you would see a true specimen of that 'happy family' which is talked of in England, but 'too frequently means simply a pandemonium,' it is to be found, according to him, flourishing in all parts of Spain, except Madrid; and the secret of this happiness is supposed to lie in the fact, that 'with oranges, figs, and dates growing wild, starvation is not easy, actual want is but little known, and the family has a thousand facilities for living together without breaking up for business reasons.' Why, this sort of existence or vegetation has been cast as a reproach in the teeth of emancipated slaves; and what did Dr Watts say about idle hands? The

Spaniard, we are informed by our *quasi-Turk*, is of opinion that Englishmen cannot help working, in order to save themselves from the self-hanging their dull country would otherwise render inevitable, whereas 'Spain is known to be Paradise, and the man has no need to work in Paradise.' Anyhow, it is quite certain that many a Spanish shop-keeper would rather, apparently, put off until to-morrow the sale of an article demanded to-day. And our *quasi-Turk*, in his curious way, seems to find something peculiarly appropriate, and even providential, in this combination of lazy Spaniard and fecund Spain, of ungrateful man and bounteous nature; for 'fancy,' he cries almost exultingly, 'what a havoc the chronic Spanish disturbances would have produced in any other country!' Our *quasi-Turk*, as a matter of course, has something to say about bull-fights, which, as a matter of course again, he defends. And his defence, a very singular one, may be summed up in the following words: 'My belief is, that they are, in the first place, an historical necessity; and, in the second, a most wholesome preventive against the natural bloodthirstiness of the Moro-Iberian man . . .

Without the boat-races, horse-races, and the endless forms of sport, the brutality and muscularity of the average Britons would have caused them to smash each other's jaws and cleave each other's skulls much more frequently than they now do. And so it is with the Spaniard, who, without the sight of warm, steaming blood offered to him at least once a week, would draw it himself, and from a less suitable source, perhaps, for he *must* have it at any price, and centuries must pass before he can be expected to change in this respect.' Such an apology for bull-fights reads strangely side by side with the daily accounts of blood drawn 'from a less suitable source.' Still his opinion was to some extent endorsed by the 'almost blind' old Countess of Montijo, mother of the ex-Empress Eugénie. With her he had an interview at Madrid, and she, who boasted that she had 'lived for about seventy years among the people of her country,' and, therefore, knew them well, said to him at a particularly threatening crisis: 'I can assure you that in a fortnight, unless something new happens, Serrano may drive daily on the Prado as comfortably as if nothing had happened. But what do I say—a fortnight? To-morrow, every danger will be over, *especially if there is a bull-fight* . . . But you might see also many new rows, and perhaps actual bloodshed, should the weather get hot, and our blood begin to boil a little. 'How much priestcraft has had to do with the character and social condition of the Spaniards, both in days preceding the horrors of the *auto da fé* and in the present generation, there is no possibility of calculating; but Azamat-Batuk's private opinion, which any one who pleases may indorse, is that 'the power of both flat and fat priests is gone in Spain, and gone for ever.'

A book about Spain and the Spaniards, and of the date 1873-74, would, from the very nature of the case, be expected to give some account of Don Carlos, Carlists, Republicans, the risks attending a journey from Bayonne to Madrid, and similar matters; and any one who happened to be at Bayonne in April 1873, and knew that Don Carlos was at that time 'hiding himself from the French police, and changing his abode almost every

week, under the protection of the hospitable landed proprietors of the south of France,' would, before proceeding from Bayonne to Madrid, naturally, being a 'special correspondent,' endeavour to obtain an interview with the Pretender. To effect this object it was necessary to become acquainted with General Elio, and convince him that there was no design of assassinating or even betraying Don Carlos. That desirable conviction having been produced, an interview was arranged.

There is 'on the Bayonne-Pau railway line a station called Peyrehorade, and about two hours' drive from that station is situated the château of M. de Pontonx, where the interview was to take place on the 11th of April, at eleven o'clock at night.' It took place accordingly; and enabled the enterprising correspondent to give the following personal description of him who, styled by his own followers Charles VII., is known to the world as Don Carlos de Bourbon, Duke of Madrid, son of Don Juan, brother of the Count de Montemolin, and who, having been born in Austria in March 1848, is now twenty-six years of age:

'He is a powerful-looking man, about six feet one, and in his frank but somewhat curt manner, reminds one of the Emperor Alexander of Russia, when he was some twenty-five years younger. His face, since he began to wear a full beard, has become quite handsome, though a slightly slobbering aspect of his mouth, and the deficiency of teeth—hereditary in the Spanish Bourbon house—not being in harmony with his manly physical appearance, spoils the first pleasing impression. He is easy of access, and without any trace of haughtiness. When seen on horseback at some distance, especially when saluting people, and frankly taking off his Basque cap, he has something picturesque about him. His bearing in private life resembles that of the younger sons of the English nobility who have entered the professions. Like them, he seems to have the capacity of enduring, for a while, any amount of hardship with great serenity of temper. Of the sovereign, the statesman, or the warrior, there is absolutely nothing in him. But he is very fond of playing the part of a king—that is to say, of *thou-ing* everybody in the old fashion of Spanish kings, not excluding even his councillors, some of whom are thrice his age, and of surrounding himself with a large number of chamberlains, aides-de-camp, secretaries, and similar people, all of whom have no other merit or duty than that of flattering his pride. I saw, myself, genuine Spanish noblemen carrying away slops after Don Carlos had washed himself, and busily engaged in seeing that his top-boots and spurs were properly polished. He is undoubtedly a religious man; but there is much less bigotry about him than is generally supposed, and, for all I could observe, the Spanish clergy do not seem to exercise any undue influence on his mind. In fact, I have seen him marching for weeks without having a single curé on his staff; but, in every village he comes to, he goes first of all to church, and pays a visit to the local priest. Like the majority of Spaniards, he is a bad horseman, and in about a month's time I saw him ruin three excellent horses. At the same time, he evidently imagines that he looks a fine cavalier with his glistening black beard, his dark-blue hussar uniform, his stars on the breast, his red trousers, his high

circus-boots, and his red cap with the gold tassel. His political notions seem to be of a very unsettled character. At all events, each time I happened to talk to him, or listen when he talked to some one else on political subjects, I was never able to make out what was the substance of his views. Sometimes he seemed quite a common-place liberal of our own day; at other times his utterances appeared to be the produce of the old-fashioned traditions of Spanish absolutism. On the whole, I think, he would make a pretty fair constitutional king, if properly restricted by law; for, having been educated in Europe, and having lived constantly under European influence, he has unconsciously imbibed the political ideas of our age. But, on the other hand, being in his private life under the influence of his family traditions, and basing his rights upon worn-out ideas, he has naturally, along with modern notions, others which would much better suit the seventeenth than the nineteenth century. In the etiquette he likes to observe at his wandering court, and in the titles and court appointments he distributes, these weaknesses come very clearly to light. As an individual, he is brave and kind-hearted; he is an excellent father, and is polite and amiable to everybody. He sleeps much, and smokes much, and is rather "hen-pecked" by Doña Margarita, Princess of Parma, whom he married in February 1867, and by whom he has two daughters and a son.

Fame, or infamy, or notoriety, or whatever be the right term, has attached itself to the name of the wild and brutal curé, Santa Cruz, a staunch upholder of the Carlist cause. Here is a characteristic story about 'his dealing with the only prisoner he had taken at Enderlaza. The whole number of *cabineros* which took part in that affair amounted to forty-one men. Five of them got off in safety, two were drowned in attempting to escape by swimming across the Bidassoa, nine were killed during the action, twenty-three were massacred because they had fired after they had hoisted the white flag, and one was, somehow or other, taken prisoner. Santa Cruz carried that man for several days with him, but when he learned that, notwithstanding the letters he had sent to the Bayonne papers giving the particulars of the affair, public opinion in Spain and France still persisted in accusing him of having shot prisoners, he sent word to his captive, saying he thought it his duty to justify the accusations of the Liberals, and therefore to shoot him. Ten minutes were allowed the poor man for confession, and four balls put an end to his life.'

The journey from Bayonne to Madrid, though uncomfortable enough, was not found to be fraught with all those perils of which mere apprehension had kept fretting, at Biarritz, Pau, and the like desirable winter abodes, the good people who would fain 'have gone for the carnival to Madrid, and for Good Friday and Easter Sunday to Seville.' The time occupied should have been eighteen hours; instead of that, it was four days. Friends, who are ever full of kind advice, especially if it will give extra trouble, had recommended to the traveller to get his papers in order, to burn all Carlist safe-conducts, lest, being found upon him, they should make him out a Carlist in disguise, and to take as little money as possible, as he was sure to be robbed. But, in point of fact, no passport was even asked for at Irún, nobody

cared to know who the traveller was, or why he was going into Spain; and the interest of the authorities was concentrated upon his luggage, which was most unceremoniously ransacked, and out of which, in default of anything contraband or prohibited, was singled out a 'Scotch plaid,' ten or twelve years old, and on that they 'proceeded to impose a heavy duty.' Vittoria was eighty miles off, and the rails were cut; but there were plenty of little omnibuses, with four mules each, to convey passengers on to San Sebastian, 'whence a Señor Marcelino Ugalde, it was said, had established regular diligence communications to Zumarraga, and thence to Vittoria.' The road was reported to be infested with Carlists; but, though diligences were believed to be in danger of being stopped, nobody 'had been killed for some time.' Safely, therefore, and with more expedition than was to be expected in a country where it is said by the inhabitants themselves that matters *se empiezan tarde, y se acaban nunca* (are begun late and finished never), the journey was made to San Sebastian, which is 'memorable,' according to Ford, 'for its sieges, lies, and libels.' Here acquaintance was made with the above-mentioned Señor Marcelino Ugalde's 'diligence,' which appears to have proceeded according to the Spanish rather than the English interpretation of the word, although 'English faces are to be seen, and the English tongue is to be heard at almost every step in San Sebastian.' The 'diligence' was 'an old nondescript vehicle of an immeasurable height, with a monstrous heap of luggage on it, and with seven mules to it;' it was lighted, if the term be admissible, by 'a wretched lantern stuck on the top;' it was laden inside, not only with dim 'objects and subjects,' of which the nature was indiscernible, but also with an atmosphere 'full of garlic and other attractive perfumes;' and away it went through a pitch-dark night, whilst the traveller, having emerged from amongst a people who talked Basque, and were 'supposed to be a set of brigands,' had before him the pleasant prospect of being fallen upon by 'ferocious Carlists,' as soon as he reached the high-road. Nevertheless, Zumarraga was reached, with nothing whatever to complain of beyond the tortures inseparable from the mode of travelling, and from 'the infamous Spanish cooking.' Even Vittoria was ultimately gained, after a few stoppages, and the payment of a few half-crowns at each stoppage to the leaders of Carlist bands. The high-road to Vittoria offered 'an excellent illustration of the manner in which the Spaniards were then carrying on their civil war;' for, 'on leaving a village occupied by Carlists,' the traveller invariably came, after a few miles' drive, to 'one occupied by Republican troops,' and was much puzzled at the 'intermittent position of the respective forces.' However, notwithstanding the proximity of antagonistic forces, a train did actually start from Vittoria, and arrive at Madrid, without any of that loss of life or of limb to which we English railway-passengers are accustomed even in time of peace.

A word of warning to conclude with. It appears that two distinct persons are occasionally confused by 'a good many Englishmen,' and 'even in public journals;' and it must, therefore, be always borne in mind that there are two Don

Alphonso in the political arena of Spain: one is a full-grown man, brother of the Pretender; and the other is a mere boy, son of the ex-Queen Isabella.

IMPROVED TREATMENT OF IMBECILES.

In our young days, every village, with scarcely an exception, had a natural idiot, who rambled about, was the butt of popular jocularities, and sometimes worked mischief that was thought extremely diverting. The idea of training these hapless beings by any sort of education was never entertained. Whether supported by public charity or by relations, they were left to grow up as unsusceptible of improvement. In Switzerland, as well as in France, the possibility of curing, or, at all events, assuaging natural idiocy, was first developed; and from the example set by these countries, a prodigious change in the treatment of imbecile children has been effected. What hand we incidentally had in this measure of social reform, will bear being explained.

When in Paris, thirty-one years ago, we took the opportunity of visiting the large public hospital called the Bicêtre, which occupies a healthy situation at a few miles' distance. It had about four thousand inmates, consisting partly of the aged and infirm, and partly of male lunatics and natural idiots. Our visit was chiefly to see how this latter class of beings were treated under the able and humane directions of Dr Voisin. There were altogether two hundred persons in various degrees of moral and intellectual incapacity. Of these, twenty were boys, and our interest was mainly centred in the method employed by means of music to rouse their imperfect faculties into activity; for, besides amusing these unfortunate children, the music led them to keep time by their hands and feet, and this had a powerfully stimulating effect. What we saw on the occasion, we described in an article in these pages (November 4, 1843), trusting that what we stated might have some effect in directing attention to the condition of imbecile children in different parts of Great Britain, and the possibility of rousing their dormant mental functions by a methodic system of treatment, such as was practised by Voisin. From the following note, which has just reached us, we are glad to learn that the information offered by the article was turned to good account:

'Thirty-one years since an article on the Bicêtre and the treatment of idiot children there, appeared in your *Journal*. A lady, Mrs P—, the mother of an idiot child, was so deeply impressed by its perusal, that she went to her minister, the well-known philanthropist, Rev. Andrew Reed, D.D., and urged him to take up the cause of the unfortunate imbeciles of this country. This he eventually did. In 1847 our Institution was founded, and has progressed so as to have become a National Asylum, and a model for all such institutions over the world. We have nearly six hundred inmates. I think you should see it for yourselves, and I am sure you would rejoice to observe to what a great tree "the grain of mustard seed," sown of old in *Chamber's Journal*, has grown. I shall be happy to afford every facility for your spending a day at Earlswood, to see the schools and workshops in full operation.'

The note purports to be from Mr William Nicholas, secretary to the Institution, and is accom-

panied by sundry printed Reports, from which we gather a variety of particulars. The asylum is at Earlswood, Redhill, Surrey, with offices for business at 36 King William Street, London. The inmates consist of boys and girls. The whole of both sexes are taught in schools, amused with various recreations, and put to different kinds of work, according to their capacity—the leading object, as at the Bicêtre, being to awaken the mental powers, or at least, as humanity dictates, to make life pass agreeably. A visitor who has described the school and industrial departments, gives, as follows, a glimpse of what is going on:

'There is great merriment as we go through the boot-making room. The row of boot-cleaners in red flannel jackets and black aprons, like Lord Shaftesbury's shoeblack brigade, are hard at it with brush and blacking-pot. The menders, sewers, and welters are all doing useful work, under the superintendence of the master tradesman; and many a pluck at the coat-tails, and constant offers to shake hands, and efforts to provoke our smiles, testified to the supreme contentment of them all. The different trades carried on in this imposing block of buildings have each rooms set apart; and the inmates are drafted off according to any mechanical taste they may have developed. Basket-making, mattress-making, unpicking and renewing; the tailor's shop, where the male dresses are made, being cut out by the master tailor, and sewn by the idiots; the laundry, where idiots are interspersed with attendants, and rendering yeoman's service in the carrying of linen and other useful tasks; the carpenter's shop, where furniture is being made, and where one inmate proudly shews us a row of invalid chairs he has manufactured himself, and another displays the treasures of a tool-chest he has just completed; the school, where a spelling-lesson is being carried on, and where the letters forming the word "magnificent" are transposed mentally by idiots, and the other words to be made out of it written out at their bidding by the master standing at the black-board with chalk in hand; the lower schools, where writing is being slowly acquired, and where the formation of letters is practised by aid of bits of wood constructed for the purpose, are all visited in turn. Everywhere there is good temper and dimmed or partial intelligence. Bearded men talk like little children, while many of the children cannot talk at all. But it is impossible not to be struck with the exceptionally developed faculties of many of those we see. One youth has the gift of mental arithmetic, and adds sums together, and multiplies three figures by three figures, giving the product with lightning rapidity. Another and older man is a humorist, whose bent is peculiar. He cannot read, but, if given a newspaper, will pretend to read paragraphs from it, which sound marvellously real.'

The inmates of different ages are employed in serving out the food, and every ounce of meat is rigidly accounted for. 'It says something for the self-control to be acquired even by witless creatures, that among those engaged in the kitchen nothing is ever missed; and that, though naturally hungry in the half-hour before dinner, in which they are occupied with cooked meat, they never pick or pilfer, but are content to wait the regular hour. There are three degrees of diet, each ample for its purpose. The patients, on what is termed

ordinary diet, have four ounces of cooked meat, eight ounces of potatoes, two ounces green vegetables, and six ounces of pudding; those on full diet have an extra ounce of cooked meat, and two ounces more pudding; while those on middle diet have each quantity slightly reduced. Boiled and roast beef and mutton, Yorkshire puddings, treacle-pudding, rice-pudding, and bread-puddings, form the staple of food. Everything is of the best quality, and when, after an interval, we return to the dining-hall, the inmates, of both sexes, are busily at work. The girls sit on one side the room, and the men and youths at the other, while an attendant stands at the head of each table to give advice and see that due order is observed. All the idiots have knives and forks, which they never misuse, and though some eat voraciously, and seem to bolt their food, there is nothing repulsive even here. For the class named, minced meat and mashed potatoes are provided, so that the injury from defective mastication may be as slight as possible.

We could multiply indefinitely examples of the interesting and puzzling cases we met with, from the idiot carrier who drives his donkey-cart down to the railway station daily, and brings all parcels safely back, to the idiot postman who conveys all letters to and from the post without a single error. In the course of a day at Earlswood you become acquainted with many things not previously included in your philosophy; and your observations form one long testimony to the admirable system in vogue there, and to the deep benefits conferred upon the most afflicted section of society by the founder of the Asylum, the well-known philanthropist, Dr Andrew Reed. When this good man first founded that home for idiots at Highgate Hill, which was the forerunner of the present establishment at Earlswood, the scene at the first gathering of inmates was sufficient to discourage the stoutest heart. "It was," we read, "a period of distraction, disorder, and noise of the most unnatural character. Some had defective sight; most had no power of articulation; many were lame in limb or muscle; and all were of weak or perverted mind. Some had been spoiled, some neglected, some ill-used. Some were clamorous without speech, and rebellious without mind; some were sullen and perverse, and some unconscious and inert. Some were constantly making involuntary noises from nervous irritation, and others hid themselves in corners from the face of man, as from the face of an enemy. Windows were smashed, wainscoting broken, boundaries defied, and the spirit of lawlessness was triumphant. It seemed to me as though nothing less than the accommodation of a prison would meet the wants of such a family. Some who witnessed the scene retired from it in disgust, and others in despair." Contrast this horribly repulsive scene with the beautiful, calm, and loving discipline of the life at the Earlswood home; and the weight of national gratitude felt to be due to the memory of Dr Reed cannot be easily overstated.

The same writer informs us that 'the Earlswood inmates may be divided into three classes—those who are elected on the charity, and who pay nothing; those whose friends can partly pay their cost, and who are admitted at a commuted rate, fixed by the board of management; and those who are the children of prosperous parents,

who are able and willing to pay the full sum charged. Some of the latter are what are called "associated cases;" others have private sitting-rooms of their own, and an attendant to themselves. Accordingly, a dinner-table is laid for ten or twelve, or for one, as the case may be, and serviettes, water-bottles, casters, salt-cellars, and all the little paraphernalia of the meal, are supplied. It is part of the education of the patients to learn to use these properly, and to behave in a seemly fashion while helping themselves. The young children, too, boys and girls, dine in nurseries set apart for them; and it was one of the most affecting experiences of the day to see the long row of infant faces, many of them pretty, and even beautiful, and all well-behaved, and to know that they formed a class apart, and that their maturity would never be lightened by the ordinary enjoyments of human life.

We need not extend the notice of an institution which has been so interestingly brought before us. Possibly, our article on the Bicêtre in 1843, suggested other establishments of the kind. At all events, one was a number of years ago set on foot at Larbert in Stirlingshire, and has, we believe, been eminently successful. It is quite clear, from all we have seen and heard of, that imbecile children are for the most part susceptible of that degree of culture which raises them considerably above a state of hopeless idiocy. Their treatment at the humane institutions we have been speaking of, should begin early—say, at four or five years of age, before the temper is spoiled, and when the weak intellect is most susceptible of being stimulated and bent in a proper direction. What a blessing it must be to many parents that there exist institutions such as those we have specified!

W. C.

FLOATING ISLANDS.

VARIOUS ancient writers speak of floating islands; the most notable, perhaps, being the islands in Lake Vadimon, now the Lago di Bracciano, in Italy, mentioned by the younger Pliny. There are different theories as to the way in which these floating islands originated. Some were probably formed by the lake overflowing, and when it subsided, carrying back with it portions of the bank, so penetrated by the interlacing roots of various aquatic and water-side plants, as to be strong enough to hold firmly together, and light enough to keep upon the surface of the water. Grasses and reeds would spring up upon it, and while their fibrous roots would increase its solidity of structure, their growth and decay would add to the amount of vegetable soil upon it. In the course of time, a single seed of a tree might be thrown by accident on the island, and it would grow up, and later on, drop its seeds, until, in the lapse of years, a dense thicket would rise above the waters, like those of the islands on the Cutilian and Tarquinian meres.

Though the islands which were celebrated in the days of ancient Rome have disappeared, there are many to be seen on the lakes of modern Europe. The largest of all are in Germany, on the Lake of Gerdau, and their grass affords pasture to some hundred cattle; but the most beautiful is that upon the Lake of Kolk, near the city of Osnabrück, on which there is a grove of lofty elms. The Lake of St Omer, in the north of France, has long been

remarkable for the large number of moving islets which adorn its surface. All are covered with a rich growth of grass; on some there are trees, and sheep and cattle are regularly sent to graze on them. There are several low reed-covered islands floating on the lakes and marshes of Comacchio, on the Gulf of Venice, the great eel-preserve of Italy; and there are similar islands on some of the Swedish lakes, that of Lake Ralang being remarkable from the fact that it is not permanent, but occasionally sinks below the surface, reappearing again later on. Until it was driven ashore in a gale, a few years ago, there used to be an island of this kind on Derwent-water in Cumberland. It was formed of tangled water-plants, and was at least two feet in thickness from its upper to its lower surface. It always appeared in one spot, immediately opposite the place where the waterfall of Catgill throws itself into the lake, being anchored there by weeds growing from the bottom and interlaced with it. When a stick or fishing-rod was driven through it, a jet of water would spout up from the hole, thus indicating that some spring or current was pressing against it from below, and this was probably the force which kept it at the surface, and being of an intermittent character, allowed it at times to sink to the bottom. Taking into account the nearness of the waterfall, the natural inference is, that the current came from its waters, which would, of course, flow with varying force and volume, according as the stream was diminished in dry weather or swollen with rain. In the case of the Swedish Lake of Ralang, there is, probably, either a current entering the lake below its surface, or a spring bubbling up from the ground at its bottom, which acts in a similar way upon the floating island.

Loch Lomond formerly possessed a 'fairy isle,' but that too has disappeared; and the few floating islets which are to be seen on lochs in Ireland and the Highlands, are generally nothing more than drifting masses of turf or peat, covered, in some cases, with grass or reeds.

These islands are formed on a much larger scale, and in greater numbers, on the immense rivers of Asia and America. They are numerous in the vast delta through which the Ganges and Brahmapootra discharge their waters into the sea. This delta extends over eighteen thousand square miles of flat alluvial ground, and the lower part of it consists only of muddy islands, intersected in every direction by the channels of the two rivers, covered with a rank tropical vegetation, and swarming with birds and reptiles. Driftwood accumulates in the creeks and shallows; the floating timber is firmly knit together by water-weeds, and covered with mud, which in its turn is soon concealed by a luxuriant growth of grass, shrubs, and even trees. Then, when the country is flooded by the rising of the rivers in the rainy season, these great islands, bearing upon them plants and trees, birds, crocodiles, snakes, and other animals, are swept out of the quiet channels in which they have been formed, and borne into the main stream; and by that means in a few hours they are carried out to sea. They have been met with by ships in the Bay of Bengal as far as a hundred miles from the mouth of the river, sometimes even two or three being in sight at one time, the trees acting as a sail, and bearing them on before the wind, and the island below rising and falling with the waves.

On old charts there are always several spots marked with the word *Vigia*, a Portuguese expression for 'Be watchful,' or 'Look out.' This indicates a point where land has been seen by some navigators, though others have passed the place without sighting any. There have been many surmises as to what it was that deceived the first explorers. To us it seems not unlikely that, at least in the case of those seas which receive the waters of the great sub-tropical rivers, the objects sighted by the early voyagers on those spots were drifting islands. In another point of view, these phenomena point to a solution for the long-vexed question, of how it was that the islands of the East Indian Archipelago and the Pacific received their animal life. In many cases, of course, it is probable that the islands were once connected with the continent of Asia, but, for the most part, this seems impossible. But it is easy to imagine how, in the long course of time, many a life-laden islet may have floated out from the rivers of India and China, and after drifting about at sea, been borne to the coasts of the scattered islands of the ocean, bringing with them the plants and trees, and the insect, reptilian, and perhaps even mammalian life of the continent from which they came.

Immense numbers of islands are formed in the same way on the waters of the Amazon, the Orinoco, and the Mississippi, which flow in a considerable portion of their course through dense primeval forests. On the last river, they are popularly known as 'rafts.' For the most part, they lie stationary on the calm waters of creeks and bays, or anchored to the bank where the current runs slowly. Sometimes, however, they are carried away by a flood, and descending the stream, pass out into the Gulf of Mexico, often carrying with them, like those of the Ganges, birds, serpents, and alligators, which have rested on them when they lay quietly in the upper part of the river.

So far, we have spoken only of natural islands; but 'floating gardens' are, and long have been counted among the wonders of two widely distant, but remarkably similar districts—the valley of Cashmere in Asia, and the valley of Mexico in Central America. Both the cities of Cashmere and of Mexico are built on low-lying tracts of ground. Mexico is surrounded by a lake, and only approached by long causeways, constructed under the ancient Aztec dynasty. Cashmere stands on the shore of a large lake, surrounded by marshes. Before the Spanish conquest of Central America, the Mexican lake was much larger than it is at present, having been subsequently drained to a great extent, and its level thus lowered. There was no land in the immediate neighbourhood of the city; but native ingenuity supplied the want, and added a fresh charm to a place in itself sufficiently beautiful. Whether there ever were natural islands floating on the lake, we do not know, but it is not unlikely that there were, and that from them the Aztecs took their first idea of floating gardens. These consisted of a great raft of wicker-work, often two or three hundred feet long, and strong and buoyant enough to support a deep bed of rich moist earth. A tree was usually planted in the centre of the raft, for the sake of its shade, and there was sometimes a hut for the gardener. Some of these gardens were devoted to the cultivation of vegetables for the markets of the city, such as cucumbers, melons, gourds, and other plants which

flourish best in a damp soil; but far more beautiful were those which were sown only with bright tropical flowers, destined to deck the palaces of the Aztec emperor and his nobles, or adorn the huge temples of the sun. The garden was either allowed to drift over the lake, or, as the water was nowhere of any great depth, was pushed along with a pole, or anchored in one spot by tying it to a long stake driven into the mud. Nothing in the whole of Mexico struck Cortes and his companions with such wonder as these floating gardens, and they called them *chinampas*, giving a Spanish form to the native name. According to Humboldt, the chinampas were very few in number when he visited the lake, for the extent of its waters had diminished; and the muddy shores laid bare as they fell, had been embanked and cultivated, and in many cases the name of chinampa, which properly belongs to the flower-covered raft, had been given to the mud-embanked gardens on the shore, perhaps because grounded chinampas sometimes really formed the basis of them.

The low-lying borders of the Lake of Cashmere are liable to frequent inundations, by the flooding of the streams and rivers which flow into it; and here the ingenuity of those who formed the floating gardens had for its object, not so much to compensate for the want of land, by carrying on a strange cultivation on the surface of the lake, as to protect the garden and its produce from the overflowing waters, by making it buoyant, so that it would rise above the flood. The floating gardens of Cashmere are constructed like those of Mexico, but are far less beautiful, because they produce no trees or flowers, but only vegetables for the table. At ordinary times, they are either anchored on the lake, or grounded in its muddy shallows; but in the rainy season, when the lake is full, they float in safety on its surface, while all that grows upon the neighbouring grounds is submerged under several feet of water.

When we think of the flower-covered chinampas which adorned the Mexican lake in the days of the Aztec empire, it occurs to us that we might add largely to the beauty of some of our own lakes and artificial waters by taking a hint from the people of ancient Mexico. These floating gardens would not cost much to construct, and would be surpassingly beautiful. The chinampa resting calmly on the surface of the lake, or gliding slowly with the breeze, and bearing with it its growth of flowers or ferns and willows, would be a new and pleasing feature in our parks and public gardens.

OUR CONVICT SYSTEM.

WHAT to do with criminals, has in recent times been a perplexing question. Formerly, the short process was to hang them. Public executions were a very ordinary sight, and so common were they, that in literature they had their facetiae. Then, within the recollection of middle-aged men, more humane views began to prevail. Punishment to some distant penal settlement was considered the right thing. But the colonies on which this indignity was inflicted began to rebel, and banishment had to be given up. The next thing tried was penal servitude. The plain meaning of this was, that the convict was condemned to a kind of slavery and obligation to work under a system of rigorous discipline for a certain number of years—five, seven,

ten, or for life, as the case might be. To the convict, however, a gleam of hope was held out. If he conducted himself properly, a part of the servitude would be remitted, and he would be allowed to depart, on the condition, that he reported his place of residence to the police, and thereby continued under a species of surveillance. Such has been what is termed the ticket-of-leave system, and it is interesting to know if it has been successful.

At a casual glance, this modern system looks as if it were no punishment at all—a mere retreat for a few years from society. In practice, convicts feel it to be otherwise. They suffer no cruelty; but to the reckless and depraved, the seclusion and discipline, the absolute loss of name and individuality, are terrific and, we believe, wholesome. Those who never thought before, are made to think, if they are capable of thinking at all. And with thinking come a proper sight of past errors, and resolutions of amendment. Let us, in a small degree, explain the system.

A sentence of penal servitude is usually divided into three stages: the first stage is passed in what is technically termed 'a close prison,' such as Pentonville or Milbank, where he passes his whole time—save the periods allotted to exercise and the ministrations of the chaplain—alone in his cell; he is allowed to work at employment, but otherwise there is nothing to occupy his mind, or prevent him from dwelling upon his miserable position, and the gloomy future that is awaiting him for so many years. During this time, it is a rare case that he does not become open to lessons of admonition and warning, or, at all events, feel a bitter regret for his irrevocable past; and it may well be asked: 'Why should not this system, which thus works so well, be extended to a longer period?' The answer is, that human nature cannot bear it. The experiment has been tried, and failed. It is found that nine months of solitary confinement is the limit of punishment that can be thus imposed without enfeebling the mind of the prisoner, and making him unfit to fulfil his duties in life when the prison gate shall open for him at last, and permit him to undertake them.

Upon the expiration of his nine months' solitary confinement, the convict is sent to another description of prison, where he is employed in 'restricted association' with his fellows, in labour on public works, unless his constitution should be such as only to admit of indoor employment, such as bootmaking, tailoring, &c. But he, in all cases, inhabits a separate cell, so that the great danger of contamination from bad society is avoided. During the various stages of his imprisonment, he is never deprived of that hope of bettering his condition, without which his life would be almost insupportable. If his conduct is satisfactory, he is always on the road to 'Promotion'; and small as are the privileges he can thus obtain, they are very earnestly sought after. The reward of better diet, bestowed up to 1864, has been abolished, not only as an unworthy motive, but because it was found that unfavourable impressions were produced outside by comparing such diet with that within the reach of the honest free man. The advantages now consist in more frequent communication by visit or letter with friends, in more freedom for exercise on Sunday, and in the earning of a higher gratuity of money to be paid on the convict's

discharge. Above all, he is offered the, to him, immense though distant advantage, of slightly diminishing the duration of his sentence, or obtaining 'Conditional Release.' The amount of this gain is, at greatest, one-fourth of the whole period he passes on public works, and it is obtained 'by industry alone, not by good conduct,' which in a prison can be little more than passive; certainly, he is not allowed (as is so commonly averred) 'to profit by any lip professions of piety or reformation.' On the other hand, if the convict misbehaves himself, he forfeits such privileges as he has obtained, and may even subject himself, by continued insubordination, to return to the penal class—that is, to solitary confinement—for the last six months of his sentence. Corporal punishment can only be inflicted by order of the Director, and even then only for certain grave offences defined by the Secretary of State, and after full inquiry upon oath. Every endeavour seems to be made that the convict shall never suffer from injustice, the sense of which wrong has so bitter and evil an effect upon the character of us all; and to this end he has unrestricted right of appeal not only to the Governor, but also to the Director, who, not coming in daily contact with either officers or prisoners, can give a fresh and impartial consideration to every case. Of the effect of the probationary system, it may be stated that about one-half of the male prisoners, and two-thirds of the females, are actuated by it to the extent of giving no offence at all during their whole incarceration; while of 1631 prisoners discharged in 1871, only 128 failed to gain some remission of their sentences. The results of good conduct are obtained by a system of marks: eight being given for each day's steady, hard labour; seven for a less degree of industry; and six for a fair, but moderate day's work. The measurement of this work is not left to the prison warders at all, but to a special staff of professional officials. 'In this manner,' says Colonel DuCane, in his admirable little book upon Penal Servitude, 'day by day, week by week, and year by year, the convict can count and record the progress he is making towards an advance in class, in accumulation of money, and towards final remission of his punishment; and he is made perfectly to see and feel that his own fate is in his own hands, and that he has something to work for, and to hope for, more than the mere avoidance of punishment.' The female convicts may, by good character and conduct, earn even a larger portion of remission—namely, one-third. And now comes the most important point in the whole question, and which concerns our readers almost as much as the convicts themselves—namely, what steps are taken *after their release* to make these men honest members of society.

In the first place, when he is let out from jail, he is, as has been said, placed for the remitted portion of his time under the supervision of the police, to such an extent as to satisfy them that he is conducting himself properly, or, in case he should, perversely and unfortunately, return to his evil courses, to insure his being sent back to prison; and secondly, he is offered the inestimable assistance of the Discharged Prisoners' Aid Societies. Of the benefits conferred by the chief of these, the offices of which are at 39 Charing Cross, we have spoken years ago in this *Journal*; and since that date, we learn from a pamphlet (*Prisons and*

Prisoners) published by its active honorary secretary, Mr Ranken, that its usefulness has largely increased. It has already aided nearly 8000 discharged convicts on their conditional release. Its mode of operation is as follows: its officers supply blank forms to the governor of every convict prison, headed 'Prisoners to be recommended,' with columns relating to the nature of their crimes, character while in prison, probable amount of their gratuity upon release, &c.; and the governor fills these in, with the addition of some particular remarks: and almost every case so recommended is accepted by the Society; the exception being where the man has attempted to do grievous bodily harm. These convicts are brought direct to the Society, from Milbank, by an officer of the jail, but at their own request. A hand-bill, setting forth its objects, is conspicuously pasted in every prison, and every man who has no respectable friends, or prospect of employment, is advised by the governor and chaplain to seek its aid. All who do so, give a written order to the prison officials to pay the gratuity given to each man on his discharge, into its hands; in some cases money is added by the Society; and thus the means are provided, and spent in the most judicious way—in tools, stock-in-trade, clothes, &c.—for starting the fallen man on a new career. Above all, it gives him recommendations—though without concealing the facts of the case—to employers of labour. The results of all this are, that so far as can be judged from the period to which the license extends—and it is but fair to suppose that after so long a period of good conduct, the man will continue his honest career—only ten per cent. have relapsed into crime. There was at one time a great outcry against this system, which is popularly known as the ticket-of-leave; but the fact is, as we are about to shew, that its working has been extraordinarily successful.

The average for five years, ending in 1859, of the sentences of penal servitude was 3042; for the next five years, 3109; for the next five years, 2587; while the actual number in 1870 was but 2015; and the actual number in 1871 but 1818.

This fact, considering the increase in our population, is most gratifying, and seems to us to speak volumes in favour of our present prison system. The number of re-convictions has also decreased steadily of late years, and though not in the same proportion, this circumstance, as Colonel DuCane justly remarks, is by no means to be regretted; 'for if a certain number of crimes must needs be committed, it is much better that these crimes should be committed by one set of people, than that fresh recruits should be brought into the criminal ranks.' The main object we should have in view is to get *convictions* down to a minimum, and to that happy end we are without doubt tending. Another very welcome feature in the convict system is, that it is getting to be cheaper, because Self-supporting. Up to a recent date, the attempts made in this direction, partly from the somewhat unreasonable complaints of certain trades, who thought themselves aggrieved by prison competition, were discontinued; but the employment of convicts on the Public Works has saved the national pocket, and hurt nobody. In 1871, the gross cost of our convict establishments was L.313,633, but the earnings of the prisoners were more than two-thirds of that sum—namely, L.228,244. Many of our

readers must remember to have seen 'gangs' of unhealthy wretches working in chains in the dock-yards, and dragging heavy loads, which horses could have done more cheaply, as well as better: such labour was neither reformatory nor remunerative; whereas, now, such important undertakings as the Breakwater at Portland—which we should not have liked to pay for by a vote in the House of Commons—are effected by our prison hands. Indeed, at Portsmouth, Chatham, and Portland, the convicts have not only supported these establishments, but earned us £17,559, clear gain, after all expenses have been paid. The earnings of convicts, however, are discovered to be only about two-thirds of what can be gained by navvies in a state of freedom.

THE MONTH:

SCIENCE AND ARTS.

FROM a Report to the Admiralty by the captain of the *Challenger*, we extract a few particulars, which, in their relation to the transit-of-Venus expeditions, are full of interest. The vessel arrived at Kerguelen Island on the 7th of January last, and the aspect of the weather and of the desolate shores was anxiously watched, with a view to obtain information that might be useful to the astronomers. The winds are generally westerly; but the mists which they bring do not pass round to the lee-side of the island; consequently, it will be possible to choose a clear station for the observations. January is a summer month in those latitudes; but Captain Nares remarks: 'The weather experienced during our stay may be well compared with that of England in winter, but in the favoured parts the sky is more frequently clear than it is at home in that season. December is said to be the finest month.'

If there is no place too dreary for science to visit, so is there none too dreary for trade, and Kerguelen and the adjacent isles are visited by three schooners from the United States for seal and walrus fishing. Useful information concerning winds, shoals, and anchorages was obtained from the fishing-parties, who remain on the islands for many months. On Heard Island, forty men were found occupying two huts, sunk in the black lava-ground for warmth and protection against the strong westerly winds. 'They appeared,' says Captain Nares, 'a contented set of men, and to have fair rations, which they eke out with penguins, burning the blubbery skin to help out their fuel. There are no ducks on the island, and the cabbage is of a poorer and smaller growth than at Kerguelen.'

Practical meteorology still goes on: throughout the length and breadth of the United States, the results of observations are made known twice a day by telegraph. The British Meteorological Office, Victoria Street, Westminster, is in connection with observatories that stretch from Norway to Spain, including the intervening countries. At one hundred and twenty stations round the British Isles, storm-signals are displayed; and one hundred and eighteen standard barometers are placed, for the use of fishermen, at the most important fishing-stations. More than a thousand volunteer observers, with rain-gauges true to the $\frac{1}{16}$ th of an inch, are helping Mr G. J. Symons to keep a proper account of British rainfall; and they may

take to themselves the assurance that the value of the work will be more and more recognised.

Our neighbours, the Hollanders, have a Meteorological Institute at Utrecht, in which, under some of the ablest officers of their navy, good work is done for the benefit of navigation, which may worthily take its place by the side of what is effected by our own Meteorological Office. One of their latest publications, *Sailing Directions from Java to the English Channel*, is interesting to the mariners of all countries, inasmuch as it tells them how to make the voyage in the shortest possible time. In preparing this book, the log-books of a large number of ships have been examined, comprehending a long course of years, and the exact times at which the several ships crossed certain parallels and meridians was carefully noted. Each voyage is so thoroughly discussed, that any captain may examine the course he took, and see for himself where he gained and where he lost, and in what way his passage was lengthened or shortened. The average of the whole is then taken, and shews that certain crossing-points must be, as a sailor would say, 'closely fetched,' while on other parallels or meridians, a captain may do what seems best, according to wind and weather. One example may suffice: A sailing-ship bound from the Cape of Good Hope will arrive off the Lizard in sixty-three days if she crosses the fifth parallel of south latitude to the westward of 17° 5' W.; whereas, if she crosses the same parallel to the eastward of 16° 5', the time required will be sixty-six days. In other instances, four or five days are gained, and in the best course of all, a clear gain of ten days is shewn. The book is so printed that these results can be readily seen and understood; and for still further clearness, a chart for each month of the year is given, shewing the most advantageous route to be taken by a ship in any and every month. Hence, if, by bad weather, a ship has been driven out of her course, the captain may easily see how best to recover it. From this brief sketch, our readers will see that the Meteorological Institute at Utrecht has promoted, in a highly meritorious way, the interests of navigation. The book, which is published in Dutch, ought to be translated into the language of all the maritime nations of the world.

Of late, the remark has been made, that accidents of all kinds are on the increase, shipwrecks included. It raises an important question (for the remark is supported by facts), Are those things which need not have happened accidents? An American professor contends that want of attention and imperfect chronometers are the occasion of a large number of wrecks; and he has prepared a series of tables shewing that a navigator, provided with an ordinary chronometer, must look out for errors in his reckoning of the place of the ship varying from three to twenty-one miles. With such a large margin for danger, it is no wonder that ships run on rocks, reefs, or shores, and perish. It would be well if as much pains were taken in testing chronometers in all countries as are taken in the observatories at Greenwich and Liverpool. And, after all, may it not be that ships are lost through want of watchfulness? Even the best instruments will not replace eyes. That watchfulness can do great things, is implied in the saying, that with thermometer and sounding-line, a ship could now find her way to almost any port without a compass.

The United States' government has published a Report on the voyage of the unfortunate *Polaris*, from which we learn, that during the voyage more than seven hundred miles of coast-line were discovered and surveyed, and that Greenland was proved to be an island. Thus, in the latter particular, the suppositions of geographers are confirmed. The observations made took a wide range, from astronomy down to geology, including magnetism, force of gravity, and the physics of the sea. The magnetic observations are described as more complete than any ever before made in the arctic regions. During appearances of the aurora, careful observations were made for the detection of electricity, but in no single instance was there any appearance of electrical action. As regards living things, it is interesting to learn that even in those frozen regions seventeen phanerogamic plants, three mosses, three lichens, and five freshwater algae were collected, and also fifteen insects, among which were four butterflies. Interesting geological phenomena were also observed; evidence was discovered that the northern coast of Greenland has risen thirty feet within a recent period, and garnets of unusually large size were found. The highest point reached was $82^{\circ} 16'$ north. The *Polaris* has, therefore, been nearer to the Pole than any other ship. In 1806, Captain Scoresby sailed up to $81^{\circ} 30'$; and in 1818, Captain Parry struggled up to $82^{\circ} 45'$, but that was with boats dragged across the ice.

The fourth annual Report of the Deputy-master of the Mint informs us that 41,846,269 coins of various kinds were struck at the Mint in 1873, and that their total value was £4,460,010, 13s. 5d. Of this total, the gold amounted to more than three millions; but in 1872, fifteen millions of gold were coined, and ten millions in 1871. With such a prodigious supply in the two preceding years, it seems natural that the demand should have slackened. Advantage of this was taken for renewal and repair of the machinery, and all coining-work was stopped during twelve weeks. To an outsider, it seems best that in a national establishment the machinery should be so arranged that some part thereof should be always available for work.

The Deputy-master makes an announcement in one of his paragraphs which will interest the public generally, namely, that the arrangement of the coins and medals belonging to the Mint, including those presented by the late Sir Joseph and Lady Banks, has been completed, that a descriptive catalogue has been compiled, and that the whole collection is now open to the public. It is placed in the museum attached to the Die Department, and is well worth a visit, as it illustrates the changes which the British coinage has undergone from the time of the Saxon kings to the present day. Among the coins, there are some of very special interest.

If proof were wanted that the inventive faculty is not dying out, it was given by the annual show of the Royal Agricultural Society at Bedford, where, in the implement and mechanical department, nearly six thousand articles were exhibited. It is not now the practice to exhibit all kinds of implements at one show, and this year the specimens were limited to 'machines and improvements used in the cultivation and carrying of crops.' Among these were one hundred and thirty-seven drills, all of which were reported on, and those

which deliver the seed with the greatest regularity may be regarded as the best. Formerly, drills were of one kind only; now, there are drills for a steep hill-side, drills for light land, drills for heavy land, drills for small seeds, drills for large seeds, drills for flat lands and ridge lands, drills for potatoes, in short, drills for every requirement. There were machines for thinning out turnips, which did the work as well as it could be done by hand; another for cutting off turnip tops and tails; another for feeding lambs and calves; another for sorting grain, which separates bad seeds from the good; a plough which in shallow ground will take up fourteen furrows at once; and one of the engines that burn straw for fuel, and thrash one hundred sheaves while burning the straw of eight or nine, and work equally well if fed only with cotton stalks or furze. With all these appliances, it becomes more than ever necessary that the farmer should be educated; that he should possess some knowledge of science and of natural phenomena. Next year's show, to be held at Taunton, is to comprise 'machines and improvements used in the harvesting of grass-crops.'

As connected with agriculture, we may mention that live horses and live cattle have been imported from the river Plate, in vessels built for the purpose, and with profit. As many readers know, the supply from the vast herds that range the Pampas is inexhaustible. Texas, too, has beef in plenty and to spare, and is sending it in refrigerators to New York, where it is sold at three-pence a pound. If the meat can be sent to New York in good condition, there is no reason why it should not be sent to this country. Beef at three-pence a pound would be very acceptable to thousands of Englishmen.

A remedy named 'aqua-puncture' has been introduced in France for the treatment of neuralgia. It may be described as a force-pump which can be carried about, and placed on a table, with a small flexible tube about two feet long, so constructed as to deliver a thread of water from its extremity with such force as to pierce leather. In operating on a patient afflicted with neuralgia, the piston is worked a few times, to expel the air from the tube; the point is then held about half an inch from the painful spot, the pump is worked, and the thread of water plays on the skin. Presently, a white vesicle appears on the spot where the water strikes; and any number of punctures may be made at the discretion of the operator, and in proportion to the extent of the pain. At first, the skin around the vesicles becomes red; but after a few hours, the vesicle and the redness disappear, leaving only a small black point, which is the crust formed by the drying-up of a drop of blood in the puncture. The operation is described as painful; but the relief it produces is so great, that patients always call for a repetition whenever their neuralgic pains return. Any one desiring further information on this important subject, should refer to Dr Siredey's experiences as related in the *Bulletin de Thérapeutique* for 1873.

It is stated, on the authority of Professor Helmholtz, that injections into the nostrils of a weak solution of sulphate of quinine, effectually kill the animalcule that produce the disease known as hay-fever.

At a meeting of the Newcastle-on-Tyne Chemical

Society, a paper was read to shew that in working a mine, dynamite is not only a more efficient explosive than gunpowder, but is less expensive and less dangerous. The author of the paper, in bringing his remarks to a close, said a few significant words: 'Mining as a *trade* has been organised and elaborated until, to use a not very elegant but expressive phrase, it has gone to seed. Mournfully corrupt it is in all its branches.' Unfortunately, mining is not the only trade of which the same can be said.

The old proverb which implies that everybody must eat a peck of dirt, is not often quoted by decent people; and yet, if official evidence may be believed, there is no one exempt from the risk of eating dirt or its equivalent. In the Report of the inspectors of food for the City of London, recently presented to the Corporation, it is stated that, in the year preceding, there had been condemned nearly eighty tons of meat, more than a million fish weighing four hundred tons, four thousand pounds of eels, about two thousand bushels of shrimps, sprats, oysters, periwinkles, whelks, mussels, and cockles. Fruit appears to be as objectionable as fish, for, to say nothing of cocoa-nuts and other delicacies seized in the streets, there were condemned in bonded warehouses, thirty hogsheads, eight hundred and ninety-six boxes, six hundred barrels, forty bags, and sixty-nine cartloads of figs; and in the same warehouses, boxes and barrels of currants underwent the same fate.

Here is grave matter for reflection. But for legal inspection, all this mass of filth would have been offered for sale; and the figs not sold in the streets would, by dishonest experts, have been converted into jam or some other 'delicacy.' The conclusion is, that honesty enforced by act of parliament is better than no honesty; and the question arises, will dishonesty diminish as education increases?

A HEROINE AT THE DIGGINGS.

In looking over an old newspaper (1853), we find a letter written by a young lady, who, owing to family misfortunes, found it advisable to emigrate to Australia with her brother, their whole capital to start with being three hundred pounds. Both were strong, active, and hearty, and though brought up in a luxurious and fashionable style, they resolved not to be particular as to any reputable line of industry that might cast up. On reaching Melbourne, which was then in its rudimentary state, they found they could not encounter worse inconveniences at the gold-diggings, and thither they went.

'I was resolved,' says the lady, 'to accompany my brother and his friends to the diggings, and I felt that to do so in my own proper costume and character would be to run unnecessary hazard. Hence my change. I cut my hair into a very masculine fashion; I purchased a broad felt-hat, a sort of tunic or smock of coarse blue cloth, trousers to conform, boots of a miner, and thus parting with my sex for a season (I hoped a better one), behold me an accomplished candidate for mining operations and all the perils and inconveniences they might be supposed to bring. All

this transmutation took place with Frank and Mr M——'s sanction: indeed, it was he who first suggested the change, which I grasped at and improved on. I could not bear to be separated from Frank, and we all felt that I should be safer in my male attire than if I exposed myself to the dangers of the route and residence in my proper guise. We have now been nine weeks absent from Melbourne, and have tried three localities, at the latter of which we have been most fortunate. We are near water (a first-rate article), and our tent is pitched on the side of as pretty a valley as you could wish to visit. I have for myself a sort of "supplementary canvas chamber," in which I sleep, cook, wash clothes—that is, my own and Frank's—and keep watch and ward over heaps of gold-dust and "nuggets," the sight and touch of which inspirit me when I grow dull, which I seldom do, for I have constant "droppers in," and, to own the truth, even in my palmiest days I never was treated with greater courtesy or respect. Of course, my sex is generally known. I am called "Mr Harry" (an abbreviation of Harriet); but no one intrudes the more on that account. In fact, I have become a sort of "necessity," as I am always ready to do a good turn—the great secret, after all, of social success; and I never refuse to oblige a "neighbour," be the trouble what it may. The consequences are pleasant enough. Many a "nugget" is thrust on me, whether I will or no, in return for cooking a pudding or darning a shirt, and if all the cooks and seamstresses in the world were as splendidly paid as I am, the Song of the Shirt would never have been written, at all events. My own hoard amounts now to about ten pounds of gold, and if I go on accumulating, even the richest heiress in my family in former days will be left immeasurably behind. Sometimes, when I have a few idle hours, I accompany Frank and his comrades to the diggings, and it is a rare thing to watch the avidity with which every "bucket" is raised, washed, examined, and commented upon. Wild the life is, certainly, but full of excitement and hope; and, strange as it is, I almost fear to tell you, that I do not wish it to end! You can hardly conceive what a merry company gather together in our tent every evening, or how pleasantly the hours pass. Tea and coffee we have in plenty, for every one brings a hoard, and milk we manage to obtain, for among us we have imported two cows, which cost us about fifty pounds each, but that is a mere trifle. Cake of various kinds I manufacture, thanks to old Betsy D—— for teaching me; and as for liquor, we sometimes have a little wine, brandy, or arrack, and sometimes not. And then we dance to the music of a German flute, played by a real German, or we sing glees and quartetts, or talk of Moore, Byron, Burns, Goethe, "Shakspeare and the musical glasses," &c. until midnight, and sometimes long after it. As to suitors, I have them in plenty, and not despicable ones either, I assure you.

The lady, of course, was in due time happily married. At least she deserved to be; and we trust she left the diggings, not only with a good husband, but a heavy bag of nuggets.

Printed and Published by W. & R. CHAMBERS, 47 Paternoster Row, LONDON, and 339 High Street, EDINBURGH. Also sold by all Booksellers.